

Perth and Kinross Council
Education and Children's Services
Milnathort Primary School
22, 23 September 2010

Extended Learning and Achievement Visit

BACKGROUND

To support the school in the process of self-evaluation, a team of four service managers from the Primary and Early Years team and a service manager and a quality improvement officer from the Inclusion team, visited Milnathort Primary School over 22 & 23 September 2010. The themes for the review were Achievement, Learning and Leadership. These themes were subject to scrutiny through core quality indicators from How Good is Our School? (3).

The school's self-evaluation pro forma and annual report for session 2009-10, the updated self-evaluation form completed in September 2010 the school plan for 2010-11 formed the core documentation for scrutiny and discussion during the visit. Evidence of the on-going, routine work of the school was also made available to the team.

During the Extended Learning and Achievement Visit, the team carried out discussions with the acting headteacher, depute headteacher and support and teaching staff teams, made classroom observations, reviewed documentation including children's work, and met with groups of learners and parents.

The strengths and areas for development identified as a result of this visit and the school's self-evaluation process are recorded below under the three main themes of Achievement, Learning and Leadership.

ACHIEVEMENT

Strengths

- At June 2010 almost all children were achieving in line with national standards in reading [93%] and mathematics [98%], as were most children in writing [85%] with some children at all levels exceeding these standards.
- Levels of attainment in mathematics and reading have been consistently high over the past three years with writing and mathematics showing a rising trend during this time.
- In the early and upper stages of the school almost all learners are making good progress from their prior levels of attainment, as are most learners in the middle stages.
- Across the school many children are attaining nationally expected levels of attainment earlier than would be expected.
- Overall children at Milnathort present as happy and are polite, confident and welcoming to visitors. They demonstrate respect for others and are very well behaved.
- P7 children have good opportunities to demonstrate their role as responsible citizens by being Helping Hands, Buddies and lunch monitors; each class has two representatives on the Pupil Council which meets monthly under the direction of the SMT.
- Children are encouraged to participate in a range of cultural and sporting activities both within the school and as part of authority led events.
- Parents are keen to be involved in the life of the school. Parent helpers run the Healthy Tuckshop, the gardening club, a multi-sports club and the football club and support in the school library. The Milnathort Parent Council and the Milnathort School Association serve the school well, engaging with issues that arise, promoting partnership and raising substantial additional funds.

Areas for improvement

- Develop discussions about learning and teaching between the senior management team and class teachers using the Perth & Kinross Standard for Learning. There should be a clear focus on understanding and demonstrating depth, pace and challenge.
- Ensure that high expectations of pupils' learning and standards of attainment transfer to Curriculum for Excellence through careful tracking and robust monitoring.
- Teachers should capitalise on the overall early gains made in learning by providing children with opportunities to develop depth and challenge in learning and to apply their learning in new situations.

LEARNING

Strengths

- In all classes classroom organisation and management is exemplary.
- Teachers plan a broad range of learning experiences taking account of local and national advice.
- Lessons are very well planned and prepared.
- In most classes there is evidence of good use of ICT to support learning.
- In almost all lessons observed the climate was positive as were the interactions between staff and learners. Children are treated fairly and respectfully.
- In almost all classes learners are motivated; they worked well, independently and in groups, and remained on task.
- The school takes part in all local management group activities, participating fully in the Growing Up With Loch Leven project.
- Close links with the associated secondary school and effective partnerships with neighbouring schools support effective transitions P7 to S1.

Areas for improvement

- Involving all stakeholders, review and revise the school's vision, values and aims to re-establish a shared focus on learning and teaching as the core business of the school.
- Continue to develop the principles of Curriculum for Excellence through approaches to curriculum planning which focus on progression and depth in learning.
- Develop active and experiential learning as a regular feature in each classroom - including the appropriate use of Cooperative Learning approaches.
- Revisit Assessment is for Learning (AifL) and embed in practice to impact positively on learners, developing pupil voice and feedback to learners.
- Review Additional Support for Learning (ASL) procedures across the school and agree a strategic approach to meeting learning needs:
 - Establish a whole school team approach, including management, teachers, support staff and visiting specialists; define roles and responsibilities, the referral system, timetables, meeting times, Employee Review and Development (ERD) and evaluation processes
 - Develop across the staff team understanding of ASL principles and revise the Milnathort PS Additional Support for Learning policy
 - Develop integrated working approaches with appropriate colleagues in Speech and Language Therapy and Educational Psychology

- Review the levels and numbers of Individual Education Plans (IEPs) and Coordinated Support Plans (CSPs) and develop a model of provision which reflects the needs of the children e.g. motor skills groups, social communication groups
- Use the Perth & Kinross Council Additional Support Needs Manual, “Towards Excellent Support” to help in planning to address the identified development needs
- Access and engage with support and training from the Inclusion Team, including assistance with the development of an Additional Support Needs action plan

LEADERSHIP

Strengths

- Milnathort Primary School staff form a strong and cohesive team committed to a collegiate approach in taking the school forward
- The current acting headteacher is approachable and willing to listen to, and act on, the concerns of staff, learners and parents. Staff feel supported by the depute headteacher.
- At the time of this visit, teachers had been given clear guidance on planning for learning and teaching.
- In the Pupil Council children speak very positively about their school and the new approaches to learning implemented recently
- The parents sampled during the visit were very supportive of class teachers. They demonstrated a real commitment to the school and a strong desire that it continue to improve. They particularly appreciate recent improvements in communication.

Areas for improvement

- Further opportunities for parents to be involved in the life of the school, to engage with their child’s learning and to understand Curriculum for Excellence principles and practice.
- With support from the local authority the headteacher should take forward the leadership agenda:
 - Set regular meetings of Senior Management Team (SMT), agree and produce remits which specify their areas of responsibilities and share these with all staff
 - Ensure SMT engage regularly with teaching staff in evaluation of planned learning and assessment, tracking of attainment and achievement and progress in meeting learners’ needs
 - Put in place a professional support programme of monitoring in line with Perth & Kinross Council protocol for class observations, focused on aspects of learning and teaching and which includes feedback which impacts on outcomes for children
 - Through the collegiate calendar promote the engagement and involvement of all staff in the school improvement process
 - Engage all staff, parents, partners and learners in the school’s self-evaluation process

- Consult with Parent Council, Pupil Council, Staff Consultative Committee and all staff members as appropriate in relation to curriculum developments, budget issues and school priorities
- Set up a schedule of ERD meetings, offering all staff the opportunity of supported self-evaluation and review of development targets
- Ensure that school communications systems appropriately respond to, inform and include all staff and parents
- Deliver the priorities identified in the School Improvement Plan and evaluate their impact
- Ensure that the collegiate and INSET calendars support the continuing professional development of staff

CONCLUSION

Milnathort Primary School is held in high regard by children, parents and staff. The significant strengths of each of these groups, and the quality of the relationships within and between them, mean that the school, with the involvement and guidance of central support staff, is well placed to address the areas for development identified above.